The National
Washington Memorial Church

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Memorial Church
Valley Forge

by

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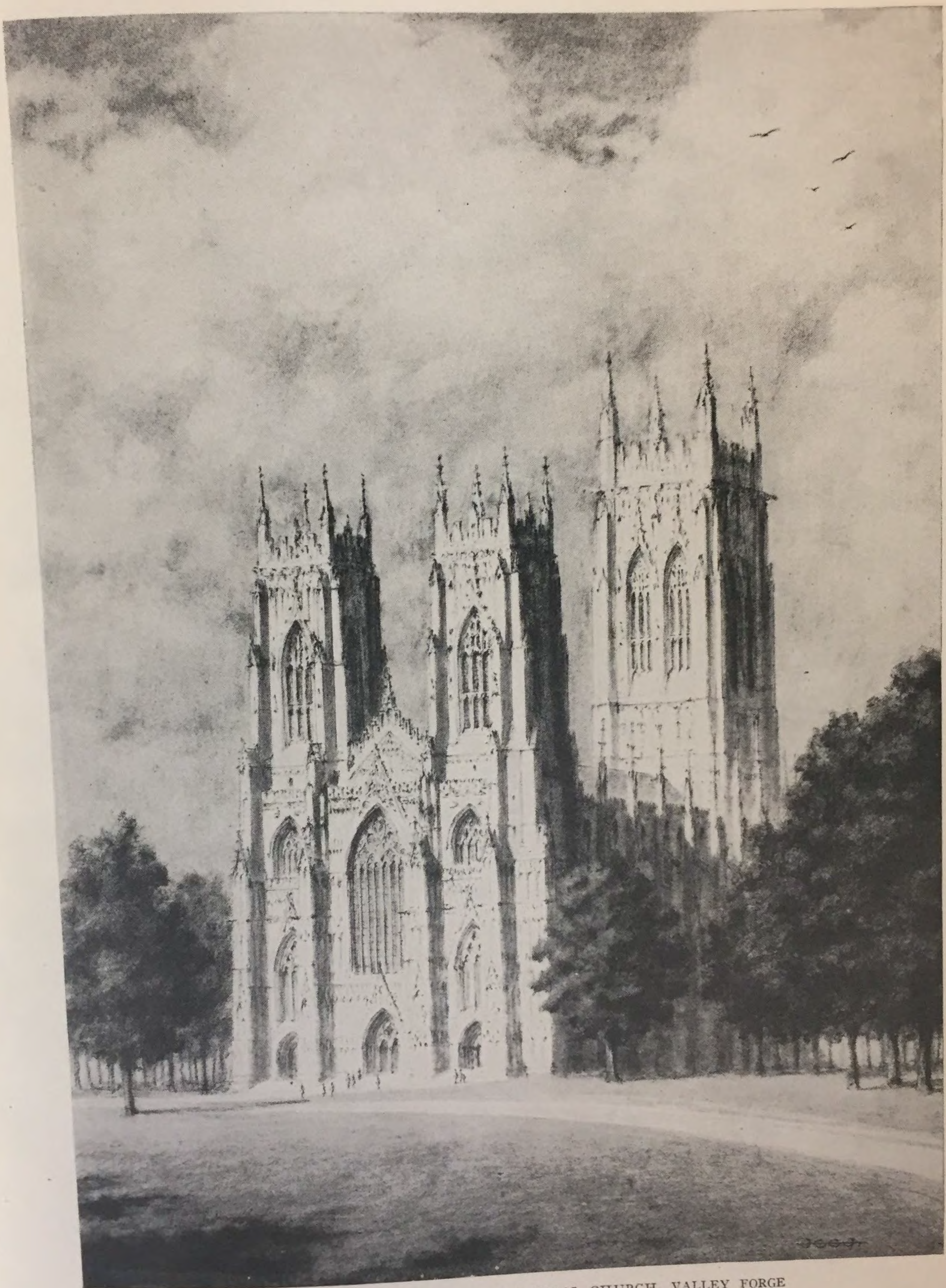


THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH, VALLEY FORGE

FOREWORD

The Washington Memorial Chapel twenty-six years ago was only a preacher's dream; to-day it is a Shrine, a place of dedication and inspiration for the American people. These Patriots through their appreciation have made the Chapel too small. As a result the need of the hour at Valley Forge is a House of Prayer large enough for all who gather here, beautiful enough to inspire all who enter, and great enough to be the Nation's symbol of thankfulness to God for all his manifold gifts and comprehensive enough to embrace all the children of God in its service of prayer and praise. The following pages have been written to bring before the people of our country the privilege of honoring Washington and the Patriots of the Revolution by the erection upon the hills of Valley Forge a House of Prayer for the use of the American people.

W. HERBERT BURK

Valley Forge
Washington's Birthday—1929

THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH, VALLEY FORGE

by Rev. W. Herbert Burk, D. D.

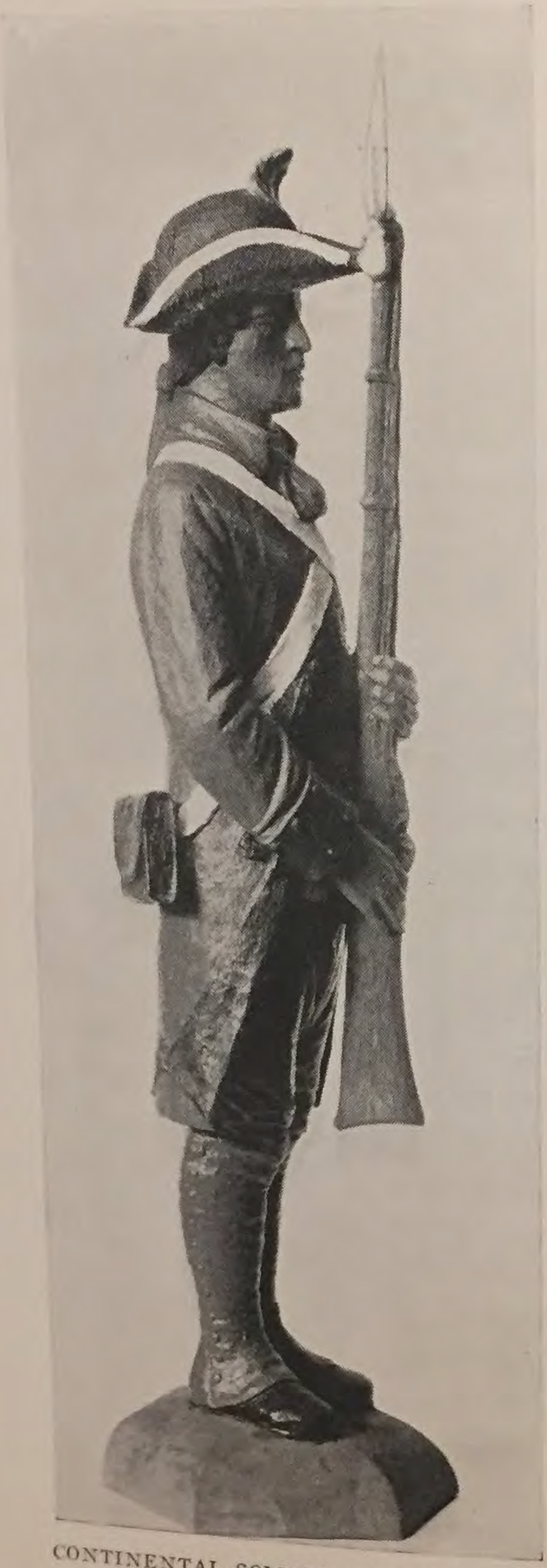
Valley Forge.—Valley Forge is famous as the site of the winter camp of the American Army 1777–1778. But even that is an inadequate historical statement, for Valley Forge saw the end of the darkest day in the history of America, and it saw the dawn of the new day for the American people. Here at Valley Forge Washington and his army of patriots learned of the French Alliance by which France acknowledged the independence of America, and welcomed the United States of America to its place among the nations of the earth. Here on the 6th of May, 1778—that never-to-be-forgotten day of joy for the struggling patriots—the Army celebrated the French Alliance and saw in it the assurance of Victory and of Glory. Here, in this Valley of Suffering and of Death America found Washington, and here out of the dark morass of the Conway Cabal rose the Man of the Hour, the Deliverer of his Country. But graven upon the heart of every American is that picture which the name of Valley Forge always recalls, illumines and glorifies—Washington at Prayer beneath the leafless trees. That is the Washington whom all Americans love and reverence.

His Orderly Books are yellow with age but the spirit of Washington the Man of Prayer shines forth from the page on which he wrote this appeal to his faithful soldiers at Valley Forge: "While we are zealously performing the Duties of good Citizens and Soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher Duties of Religion. To the distinguished Character of Patriot it should be our highest Glory to add the more distinguished Character of Christian."

Today at Valley Forge the patriotic pilgrim finds these words cut in the stone of the entrance porch of the Washington Memorial Chapel. On the opposite wall is his message to the Nation which he had striven to create: "Of all the Dispositions and Habits which lead to political Prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable Supports. In vain would that Man claim the Tribute of Patriotism who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the Duties of Men and Citizens."

Above these messages of life and faith glows in the glorious glass his valedictory prayer for the American people: "I commend the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God, and those who have the superintendence of them to His Holy Keeping."

The Washington Memorial Chapel.—A little more than a quarter of a century ago Valley Forge was only an historic memory, the setting for a woodland prayer. Today a million Americans pay homage to Valley Forge from one Washington's Birthday to the next. Washington's Headquarters and Varnum's Headquarters, markers and monuments are all visited but the climax of every pilgrimage is reached in the Washington Memorial Chapel. Nowhere in the world has art and architecture, history and religion wrought such a perfect work. It is not at Valley Forge. It is Valley Forge.



CONTINENTAL SOLDIER, CHOIR SCREEN,
WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHAPEL.
CARVED BY EDWARD MAENE

Here the prayer beneath the leafless trees is no longer the prayer of the lone patriot. It is the never-ending prayer of a multitude. For where Washington prayed the Nation now worships.

"The Shrine of the American People."—It was President Wilson, who, in the soul-testing time of the World War, named the Washington Memorial Chapel, "The Shrine of the American People." England, in the person of Wilfred Powell, its Consul General, named it "The American Westminster," so rich is the Chapel in tributes to the makers of the Nation. So it will always remain; a place of beauty, a place of peace, a place of prayer. Already its marble floors and stone steps are worn with the eager feet of the pilgrim patriots. Its pews are filled, its aisles are crowded, and yet its doors are thronged with the thousands who cannot enter its portals. Twenty-five hundred Boy Scouts from only two Counties have stood in the ice and snow for their annual Washington's Birthday Service, while congregations of one or more thousands have gathered in the Woodland Cathedral for an open air service. When President Harding spoke on the fifth of June 1921, fifteen thousand filled the Woodland Cathedral and the surrounding grove far and near.

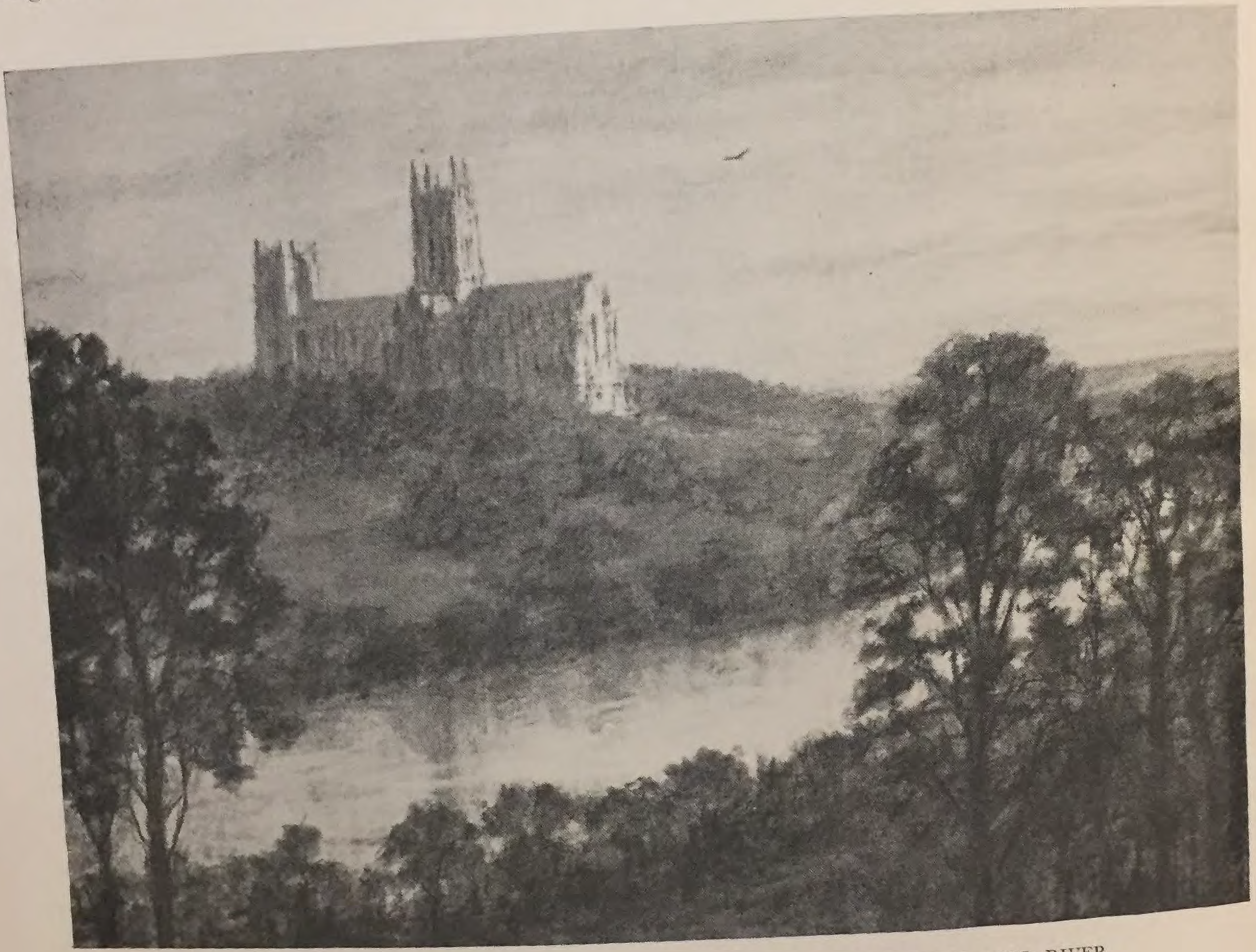
The Washington Memorial Chapel has seats for 125, not counting the choir. Four hundred men and boys have literally packed the Chapel from wall to wall for a service. And still the throngs of worshippers increase. The real need for space gives new force to the Prophet's cry to Israel of old: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." (Is. 54:2, 3.)

With God All Things Are Possible.—To enlarge the Chapel was impossible. There was no space upon which to build a large church, except in the rear. This ground was ill-adapted to the erection of a church, and it was poor psychology to attempt to raise the money to build a church back of the beautiful Washington Memorial Chapel. The Valley Forge Park, which was a half a mile away when the Chapel was begun, now surrounds it. Not a foot of State ground could be used. Yet at Valley Forge a church must be built for the worship of God by the American people. Palm Sunday, April 10, 1927, came. In the early afternoon a spark from a chimney lodged on the roof of the beautiful home of Mrs. Sarah Swift Zulich in the fine grove adjoining the Chapel. Despite the efforts of several fire companies and a multitude of visitors in a short time there was nothing left but the smoking ruins. Most people would have been crushed by the loss, but Mrs. Zulich's faith and trust made her take up her life with new hope and vigor. Our good neighbor found blessedness in ruin and rejoiced that her ground could now become the site of a House of Prayer for the American people. She has shown that the Valley Forge spirit of service and sacrifice, faith and prayer is still the heritage of these hills of history and especially of those who look above them to their God. Mrs. Zulich's property is not only the only ground which could be secured in close proximity to the Washington Memorial Chapel, but it is one of the ideal sites of the entire countryside for the erection of a great memorial of religion and patriotism, a Nation's tribute to Washington and the Patriots of the Revolution. The tract is deep enough to permit the location of the Church at such distance from the Chapel and the Parade Ground that it will not dominate either. It will stand on ground which was outside the encampment, but near enough to be associated with it in thought and feeling. Its elevation above the Schuylkill River will give it a setting rarely given to any memorial of patriotism. Its background will be the wooded hills of Valley Forge which keep watch and ward over the dust of the patriots who sleep in unknown graves in the ground revered by all Americans. The Nation is to be congratulated that this site has been secured for the National Washington Memorial Church, and all Americans will unite in the patriotic effort to make it memorable for all time by the erection here of this memorial House of God. His Providence has saved it through a century and a half for this high purpose.

The National Washington Memorial Church.—The crowning glory of the site will be the National Washington Memorial Church. Mr. Cornelius, the architect, and Mr. Thomas W. Sears, the landscape architect, have made careful and exhaustive studies of the site in order to take advantage of all its points of excellence, so that the National House of Prayer may be erected at that point which will best enhance its architectural features and promote its use by the American people. York Minster was selected as the type of structure best suited to the site and to the needs of Valley Forge. Its breadth of nave is just what is needed at Valley Forge to accommodate the crowds of patriots who assemble for worship and for inspiration. Its dignity, its solemnity and its grandeur are most impressive and such as are most befitting the atmosphere of Valley Forge. Mr. Cornelius has caught the feeling of the old minster, but has produced a design better suited to the democratic spirit of Valley Forge.

The Exterior.—The National Washington Memorial Church will face the south where the camp ground of the American patriots was located. Their memory will be preserved in stone carving and in stained glass. Great battlemented towers will rise at the corners as befitting a church of a military camp, but above the battlements will rise the carved pinnacles symbolizing the aspirations of the patriots who sanctified Valley Forge by their suffering and by their dreams for the Nation. Over the crossing will rise the massive central tower, dominating the entire structure and facing the four points of the compass as symbolic of our widespread Nation and its world-wide interests and sympathies.

The Interior.—The sketches of the interior of the National Washington Memorial Church are the earnest and pledge of what this House of God will be when the workmen lay down their tools to look upon that which they have builded for their Nation and for their God. The long nave with the choir and sanctuary beyond it give one the sense of space. One feels instantly that this is the place of peace. It is "so lofty, so wide, so simple, so truly grand," that it represents better than anything else, our sense of the Republic, as it stands after a century and a half of building. Here is room for the multitudes of patriots who come in ever increasing numbers, year after year, to worship at Valley Forge. High above the worshippers will be the



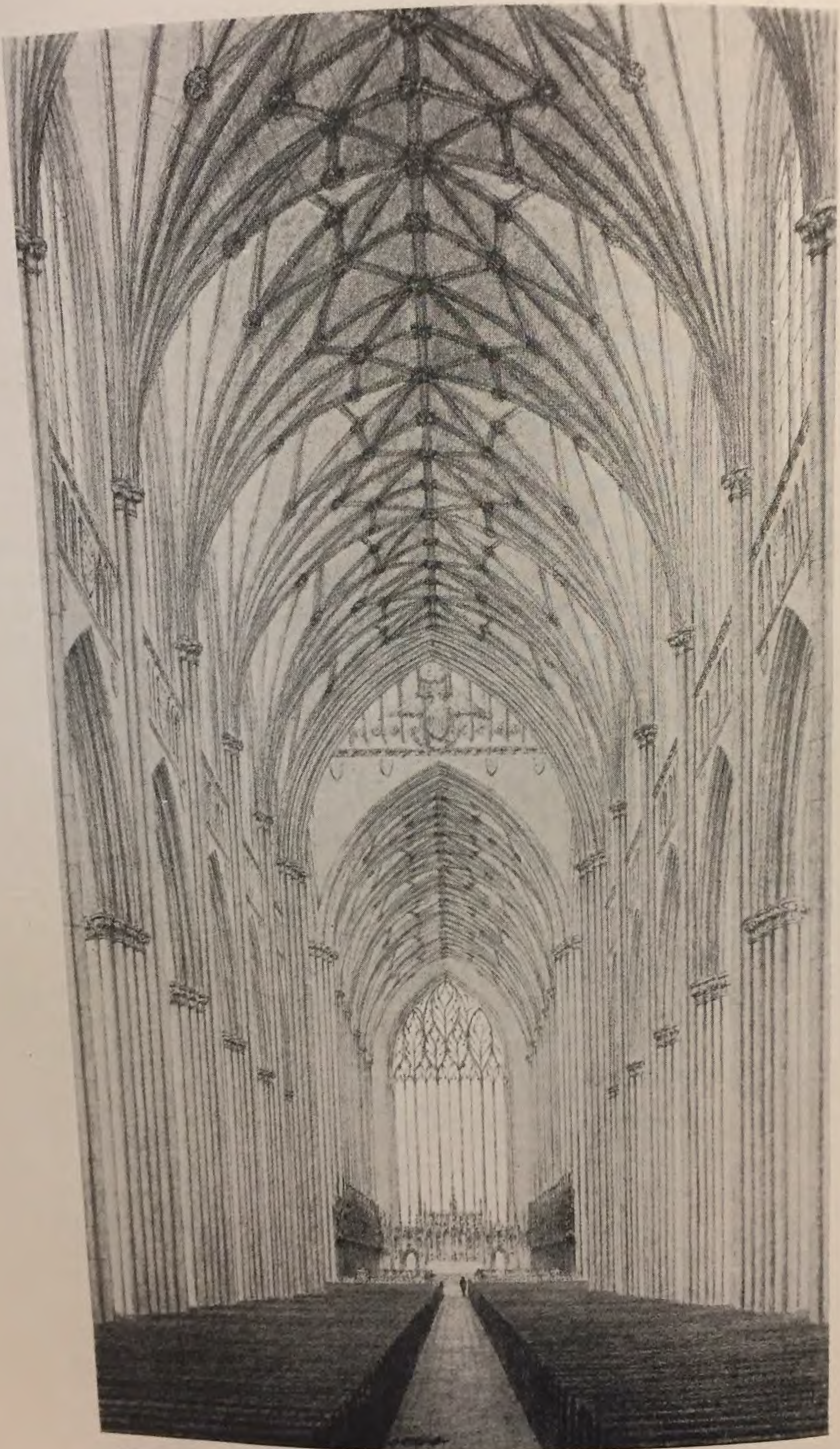
THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH—VIEW FROM THE RIVER roof of vaulted stone, springing from the clustered columns.

Mr. Cornelius has given us a rarely beautiful view across the Church. It shows one of the bays, into which the interior will be divided. Above us rises one of the pointed arches which will separate the nave from the side aisles, and beyond the nave is another with a window of the clerestory above it. The window beneath the arch is in the exterior wall of the Church. Enough of this wall is given to show one window and parts of two others. It does not take much imagination to fill the stone tracery with the rich colors of the glowing glass.

The Unity of the Nation.—In the long years of the building of the Washington Memorial Chapel many large groups of the Foreign-born citizens of the United States have come to Valley Forge and in the many schools which have come other Nations and races are represented. All these are the builders of the New America, and each brings something precious for its building. Nothing is more interesting than the race services held in the Chapel for these groups or in the Woodland Cathedral. To hear such a group sing its national anthem in the national language and then after the patriotic address to hear our National Anthem sung in English by the same group, is a never-to-be-forgotten experience at Valley Forge.

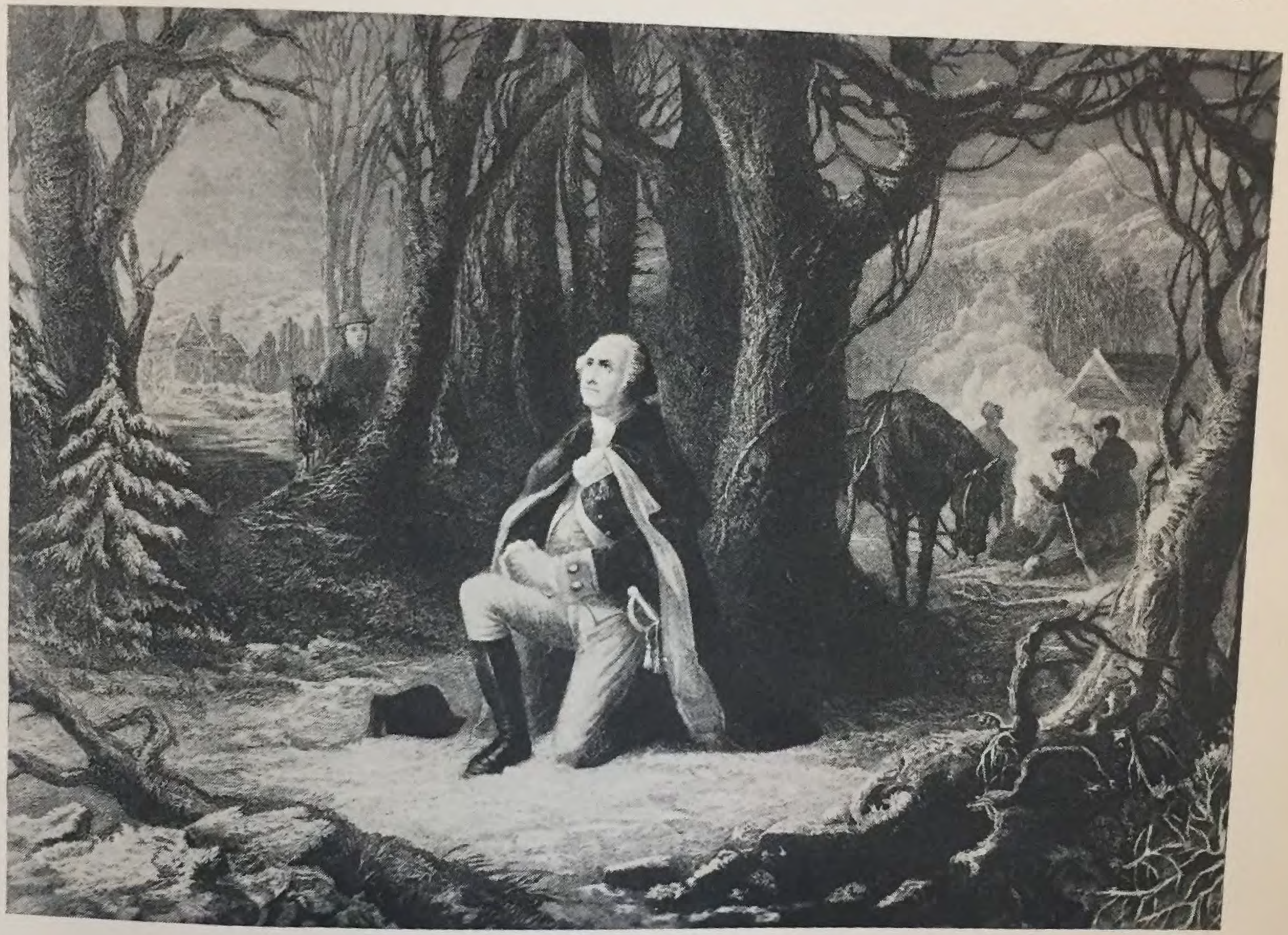
The National Washington Memorial Church will stand as a beautiful symbol of our Nation's Unity. In its very fabric all the racial and National elements of our great Republic will have a place. Out of the Nations of the World the United States of America has been formed, and to each the Republic of today is debtor. It is the work of God's own creative hand. At Valley Forge the Army was chiefly Anglo-Saxon, but the Dutch and the Swedes, and the Germans to name no others, had their places in the ranks and their names on the rolls. That army was but the vanguard of America's mighty host whose recruits have come from all the lands to conquer the earth from ocean to ocean, from Canada to Mexico, and to build its altars and hearths from North to South, from East to West. The National Washington Memorial Church must be full of the hallowed memories of the Men of Valley Forge. We cannot pay any higher tribute to them than by representing those who with the same faith, with the same spirit of service and sacrifice have built upon their sturdy foundation the Republic of the hour. As nowhere else in space and time at Valley Forge a House of Prayer will rise rich in historic memories, beautiful with the banners of the Old World, glorious with the flags of the Sovereign States of the New, to fill the heart with gratitude and to challenge the soul to consecration for larger service to God and Man.

"That They All May Be One."—The Washington Memorial Chapel was built in honor of "Washington the Churchman." In the sermon in All Saints' Church, Norristown, February 22, 1903, Reverend W. Herbert Burk, said after speaking of Washington's worship at Valley Forge, "Would that there we might rear a wayside Chapel, fit memorial of the Church's most honored son, to be the Nation's Bethel for all days to come, where the American patriot might kneel in quest of that courage and that strength to make all honorable his citizenship here below, and prove his claim to that above!" In that spirit the Chapel was built and has been maintained. The services are those of the Protestant Episcopal Church. Through such services Washington was trained for his great service to his Coun-



THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH, VALLEY FORGE—INTERIOR try and to the World. If he came to Valley Forge today he could unite in the prayers he used in youth and manhood. But here denominational propaganda has been entirely absent. The Chapel has been built "for the People, by the People," and so the Church will be erected.

For the State Sunday Services held on forty-eight Sundays of the year the Governors of the States are invited to speak or send their representatives without any regard to religious faith or denominational connections. Here again the Chapel represents the true spirit of Washington, for in a letter to Lafayette, August 15, 1787, he approved of a plan to establish religious toleration in France, saying: "Being no bigot myself to any mode of worship, I am disposed to indulge the professors of Christianity in the Church with that road to Heaven, which to them shall seem the most direct, plainest, easiest, and least liable to exceptions."



THE PRAYER AT VALLEY FORGE BY HENRY BRUECKNER

The ideal of service and worship has been that of our blessed Lord's great prayer: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:21)

The result has been that in the Washington Memorial Chapel, side by side, Hebrews and Christians, Roman Catholics and Protestants worship and each feels at home in this House of Prayer for the American People.

The National Washington Memorial Church will be maintained on the lines of the Chapel's great service in the promotion of Church Unity but on a much larger scale. In the twenty-six years which have passed since the corner-stone of the Chapel was laid great progress has been made in America toward the answer of our Lord's great prayer for Unity. Rabbi H. G. Enelow, D. D., of the Temple Emanu-El of New York has well said:

"One of the glories of our age lies in bringing people of different races, and faiths closer together. The old barriers have been lowered, if not removed, and men have come to feel that the chief glory and beauty of life lies not in polemics, but in appreciation; not in enmity, but in sympathy. This new realization has gone hand in hand with the comparative study of religions, which has led to a larger measure of understanding among the followers of various faiths. This spirit of enlightenment and sympathy has brought about a new era in the relation of the Jews to Jesus."

It has also brought about a new era in the relation of Christians to each other, and to people of other religious faiths.

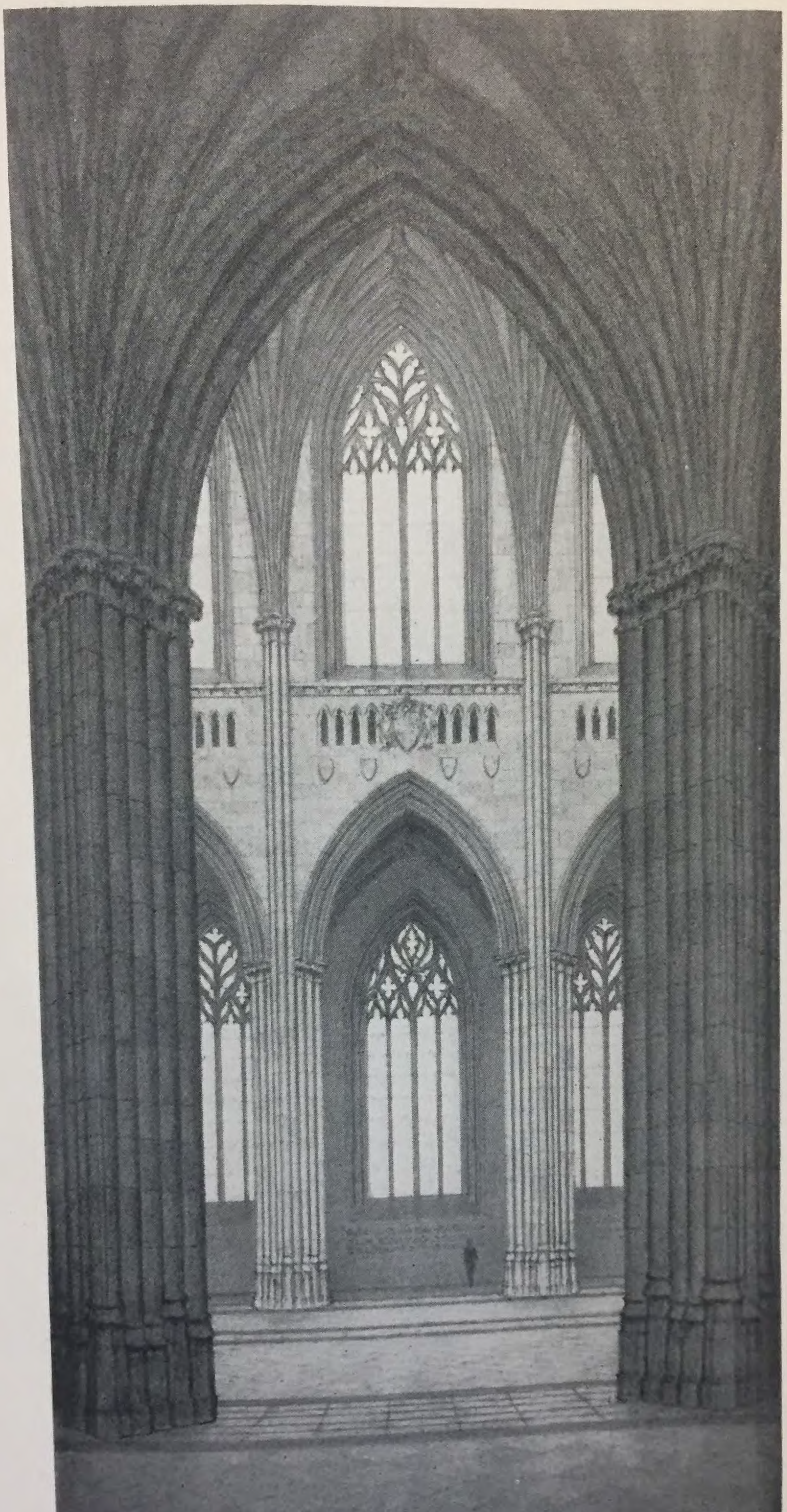
Let us build this National Washington Memorial Church at Valley Forge as a monument of religious progress and in thankfulness for it as a means of uniting the American people in the worship of God and in "brotherly affection and love for one another," as Washington prayed in the spirit of his Lord and Saviour.

The Corner-Stone of the National Washington Memorial Church.

The corner-stone of the National Washington Memorial Church was laid June 19, 1928, twenty-five years after the corner-stone of the Washington Memorial Chapel was laid, and one hundred and fifty years after Washington and his army of American patriots evacuated Valley Forge. He laid the corner-stone of the National Capitol. On that occasion he acted as the Grand Master of the Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons. To carry forward this Washington tradition the Right Worshipful Grand Master of Free and Accepted Masons of Pennsylvania, J. Willison Smith, assisted by the Right Worshipful Grand Lodge, laid the corner-stone of the National Washington Memorial Church. The impressive Masonic ceremonies were witnessed by a great congregation. The massive corner-stone is the base of a large memorial monolith which will become a part of the wall of the Church. It bears this inscription —

To the Glory of God
in Commemoration of the Evacuation
of Valley Forge
by Washington and the American Army
June 19, 1778, this Corner-stone is laid
June 19, 1928 as the
First Stone of the National
Washington Memorial Church
a house of Prayer for the
American People and a Nation's Tribute
to Washington and the Patriots of the
Revolution.

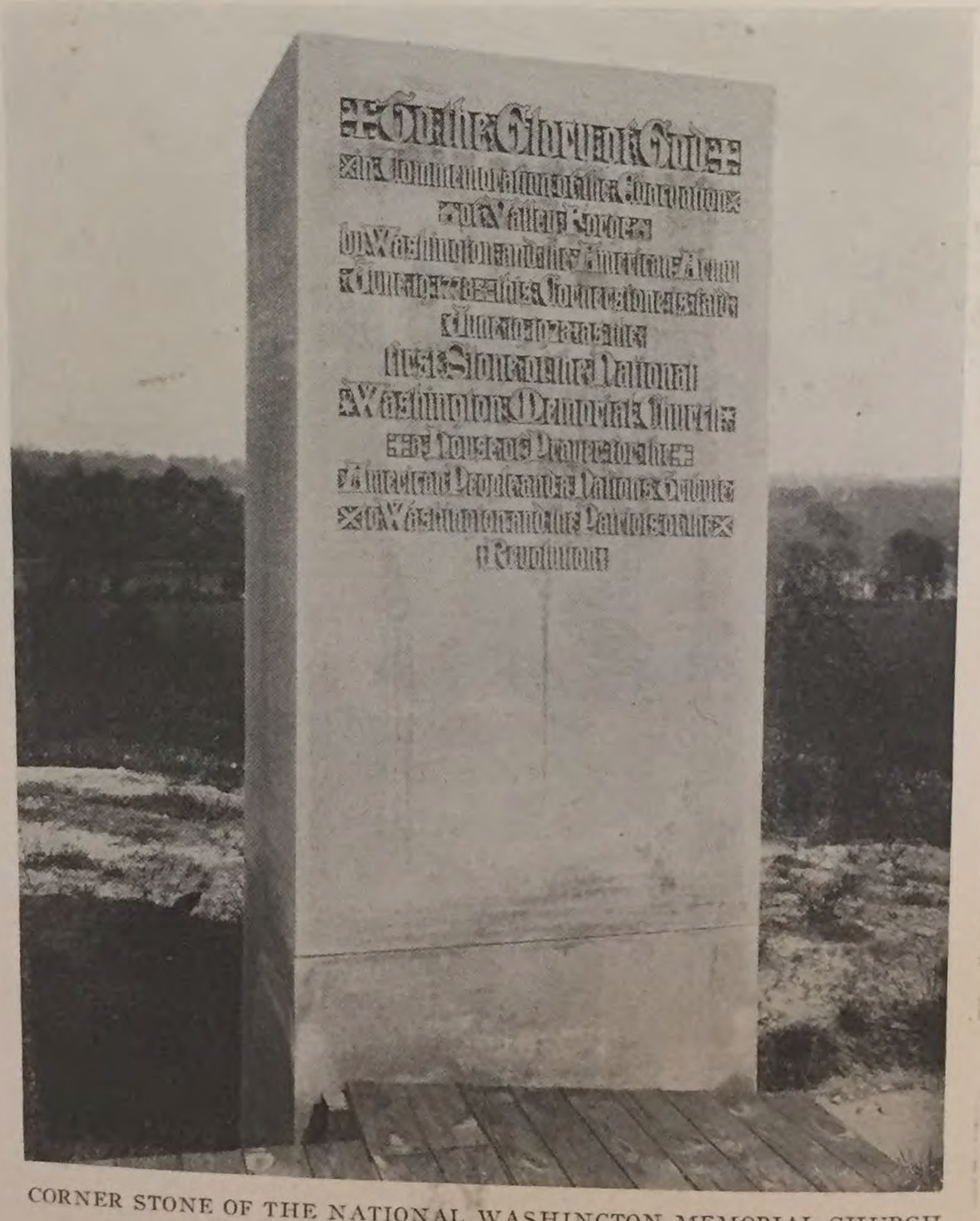
The Architect.—For the great task of designing a House of Prayer for the Nation, Mr. John C. Cornelius, Jr., of Germantown, Philadelphia, was unanimously elected architect by the congregation of the Washington Memorial Chapel. He was educated at the Germantown Academy, and studied Art and Architecture at the atelier of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Drexel Institute, Philadelphia, and under such well known architects as Wilson Eyre, Edgar V. Seeler, and Dr. Milton B. Medary, Jr., the architect of the Chapel. He has been associated with the latter for practically the entire time in which the Washington Memorial Chapel has been under con-



THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH, VALLEY FORGE—VIEW ACROSS THE CHURCH struction. When Mr. Medary became a member of the architectural firm of Zantzinger, Borie and Medary, Mr. Cornelius entered that office. He is particularly fitted for his great work at Valley Forge, not only by his association with the architect of the Chapel, but also by his studies of York Minster, England, the norm of the Church. He brings to his task highly developed technical skill, a true sense of beauty and the spiritual feeling of the true artist.

The Builders of the National Washington Memorial Church

Every American should count it a rare privilege to have some part in this great House of Prayer. Every stone laid will be a well deserved tribute to Washington and the other Patriots of the American Revolution, and a stone of thanksgiving to God for the Nation, which they builded for us through their service and sacrifice. February 22, 1932, the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of Washington, cannot be better celebrated than by the dedication of the House of God upon the hills of Valley Forge to be for the centuries to come a memorial and a shrine, a place of national remembrance and a place for national consecration.



CORNER STONE OF THE NATIONAL WASHINGTON MEMORIAL CHURCH